

STUDY IN GENESIS CHAPTERS 1 AND 2
by Willis E. Bishop

Chapter 1

There are a number of views concerning the early verses of Genesis and there are some perhaps that I don't even know about. Let me say a quick word about one that is called the "gap theory." This theory is very popular, so widespread, and I have given it some real thought myself. Perhaps just a word or two about it might be in order.

Verse 1 of Genesis 1 says: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Verse 2: And the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The gap theory view looks at it like this: verse 1, a perfect creation; verse 2, a ruined creation.

Our King James Bible reads that "the earth was without form and void." That word "was" is a Hebrew verb which can be translated "became." In some cases it is so translated in the Old Testament, not always but sometimes. And so this argument "and the earth became without form and void" -- it was perfect and then it was ruined.

Then when we come to the verses that follow where God says "Let there be light," creation days one through seven, represent a re~~x~~creation of the earth. By doing that, of course, those who hold to the gap theory are able to put the geological ages, etc. between verses 1 and 2. And it has become a very popular view.

However, in my own thinking, that probably is not correct. Let me briefly⁵⁴ why.

In Mark 10, verse 6, we read that God created them male and female in the beginning, and that creation takes place on day 6. If the beginning is in verse 1 and the creation of male and female in verse 6, and you have this big gap of geological ages in between, you don't have man and woman created in the beginning. Do you see my line of reasoning?

There are quite a number of other reasons for rejecting the gap theory. For instance, in the ten commandments in Exodus chapter 20, we read, "for in six days [God] created ... and all that in them is." So you don't need great geological ages and periods of time between verses 1 and 2.

I thought I should mention that gap theory as being very popular and held by those who really believe the Bible is the Word of God.

Q. Would it mean that there could be, I have heard it said that there were other generations before Adam and Eve, so could man have been or creatures be in between the two verses?

A. That is used concerning some of the anthropological things that they claim are gaps between the date of man or early man. I reject that in my thinking because the Scripture says in I Corinthians, "the first man Adam." There was no pre-Adamic race of men, as far as I can see.

Q. Re "the fall."

A. Not the fall, but the fall of Satan, and that the reason for this ruin [according to the gap theory] is the fact that God created a perfect creation, then Satan fell and God ruined it in order that Satan might not have use of it.

I don't find any Biblical statements concerning that, but that has been taught along this line. I'll point out when we come to the sixth day of creation that God saw all that he had done and behold it was very good. Up to that point sin had not entered into the realm of His creation and therefore Satan could not have fallen before the six days of creation. There are other things, too. For example if you hold to the gap theory then you have the death of animals, pre-Adamic man, the creation that is found in the so-called geological strata, and yet we read in Romans that death came by Adam.

Q. Where do they get the millions of years they talk about?

A. They need the millions of years to accommodate -- there has been so much pressure in the scientific world regarding the geological strata that that needs millions of years, and the gap theory, and this is where you get the geological strata. Scientists do not use carbon 14 to date anything much prior to 14,000 years or so. I have some scientific information on this in my files. They have gone also to potassium argon and radium for dating.

It is not very scientific; for example, in Radium 187 they say that the earth is 4 and 6 tenths billion years old. With potassium argon they say it is 9 and 5 tenths billion years old -- that is a simple matter of 5 billion years. That's not very accurate.

Then also there is a flood in Genesis 6, 7 and 8. I believe we can show you when we come to that study that it was a worldwide flood. If it had been local, God would have simply said to Noah, "Go across on the other side of the mountain."

Scientists are now saying that if there was a worldwide flood, whenever that took place, a few thousand years or more before Christ, any attempt to date things prior to the flood by these scientific methods are invalid because the rate of absorption has been completely obliterated by the fact that the earth was covered by water. So, though we respect the attempts of scientists to tell us some things, yet the Bible tells us some other things, too, which contradict the scientists.

Let us turn our attention to Genesis chapter 1, verse 14. Remember, on day one God said "Let there be light"; on day two we have God moving some of the water into the upper atmosphere, creating a firmament; on day three we have the dry land appearing and vegetation on that dry land. Now we'll go to the 4th day.

Verses 14-18: And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and for years, and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light on the earth," and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.

On day 1, "Let there be light"; on day 4, creating the sun, moon and stars to give light.

Our English Bibles don't give us the distinctions which are found in the Hebrew Bible. When God said, "Let there be light," that was the word "or," which means light itself. On day 4 He used the word "maor," which means light holder. So this is a different source of light than on day 1, and He replaces that source of day 1 with the sun and moon and stars. The purposes are to be for signs and seasons, for days and for years. It's just a simple matter of creating the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day.

- Q. In verse 8 "and the evening and the morning were the second day." If there were no moon and no sun and no stars and just light, how did it become night and day?
- A. Because that light was constant in the same way that the sun is constant. But there was darkness; the earth was rotating. Not only that, but (and this is somewhat of a guess) it says, "for seasons." That means that the tilt we have on the earth at the present time apparently was there. There was darkness and then light. That means evening and then morning as the earth rotated about that source of light which God had created on day 1. As we come to day 4, in place of that source of light, God created the sun and moon and stars, and we still have the evening and the morning.
- Q. In the northern countries where they have the northern lights and they have daylight for a certain period of time, is it still evening and morning? Do they consider it evening and morning?
- A. I would guess they would. As I pointed out, this is the way the Jews count their days, beginning with evening, because that's the way God made it. It was darkness and then light, so it was evening and morning -- day 1.

Q. Is the original light still here?

A. On day 4 God replaced it with the sun, moon and stars, that is the way it is stated.

Verse 20, the fifth day: And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures [I'm reading just a little differently, more nearly the original] and the fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." And God created great sea creatures and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind; and God saw that it was good.

And God blessed them saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth." And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

What we have on the fifth day is simply air and water animals that are brought into existence -- the creatures that swarm in the oceans, the great sea monsters, and the winged fowl that fly in the air.

The air and the water, the way I remember it, is that on the second day when God moved the water into the upper atmosphere he was dealing with air and water; and on the fifth day, air and water animals. We'll see later in chapter 2, at least in part, how he did this, but here it is simply stating the facts.

Verse 23, the sixth day: And God said

When we come to chapter 2 and see how God did that, it gives us more detail. At this point, in verse 24, we have cattle, creeping things and beasts of the earth. The cattle is what we know today as the domesticated type of animal. The creeping things, you know what creepers are; and beasts, the wild, free-roaming beasts -- the kinds of animals God brought into existence on day 6.

Verse 26: And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

"Let us make man in our image." Now, in theology, we find that one of the reasons we believe in the Trinity is that there are plural pronouns used of God. "Let us make man in our image" -- "us" and "our." There are those who say that God was consulting with the angels about what He should do -- don't you believe it.

Isaiah tells us that He does not consult with anybody about what He does, and here His consulting, apparently within the Trinity, concerning the making of animals, indicates the planning and forethought on the part of God. This gets into theological areas and we won't

enlarge on it here except to say that not only did God create man in His image, planned as before, and He said it looks good now, but also remember that the fall was in the plan of God. Christ's death was in the plan of God, your salvation and mine were in the plan of God before He ever created anything. The Lamb was slain, when? From before the foundation of the world.

Now God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness and let them have dominion." We have lost a part of that according to Psalm 8, but anyhow, he [man] was to have it before the fall. When God created man, it was the plan of male and female in His mind.

Q. In verse 26 it says, let THEM have dominion. Now, he must have created more than one man at a time, but concentrated on Adam later.

A. No, what we have here is a summary story. In chapter 2 you will find that God's plan is that He is creating man and woman -- one man, one woman -- and there will be descendants from them; and man in the generic sense -- they are to have dominion. You and I are even to have dominion, but we do not exercise full dominion. But it was only one man and one woman at the beginning. Christ in Matthew 19 indicates that very definitely. The "them" He has in mind are those who would come from Adam and Eve; it wasn't just Adam and Eve who were to have dominion, but mankind as such.

Q. Would you comment on verse 26, "our image"? What did he mean by "image"?

A. "In our image, after our likeness." We have many partial explanations. Look in chapter 5, verse 1, "in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created."

Adam lived 130 years and had a son "in his own image, after his likeness, and called his name Seth." Notice, Adam's son was in Adam's image and likeness. Do not misunderstand what I say, but if you think of what God is like and reduce that from infinity to finite, from unlimitedness to limitedness, you have what God is.

In other words, God is omniscient (all-knowing); we know some things. God is all-powerful; we have some power. If you were to take the attributes of God and list them and then reduce them from infinity to finite, we do mirror what God is like. In fact, it is a sin to curse another man or woman. Why? James says that it is a sin to curse someone else because we are still made in the image and likeness of God. Although we are fallen creatures, we have not lost totally that image. I don't mean to say we are not sinners and lost; I am simply saying we do mirror that image and likeness. (I don't believe the liberal doctrine that all men are sons of God and all they need to do is improve a little bit. I don't mean that at all.) That's

the idea that is back of that ["in our image"] and I think those are synonyms. "In our image, after our likeness" -- they are side by side without a connection.

Chapter 2

Prayer: Our Father, we thank You for the encouragement this morning to trust Thee; that the waves of life cannot defeat us, and that we can walk again on the waters of life. We do confess that Thou art truly the Son of God, the Saviour from sin. We pray just now that we may approach the Word with clean hands and a pure heart. May the Spirit of God be our teacher. Help us to forget the problems of the day that we may think the thoughts of the hour. We ask it in His precious name. Amen.

Let's have a look at the verses in chapter 2 of Genesis. These are some very important verses; therefore, I want to look at them in some detail. Now the first verses of chapter 2 sort of finish the creation story: Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made [through verse 3].

He did the work in six days and rested on the seventh day. I suspect we could say that He could have done it all in one day if He had wanted to. Why He chose to do it this way I don't know. Again, I think the ten commandments give us some insight into it, and that He patterned His work here so that it might be a pattern for our work week -- six days of work, one day of rest and worship. At least there wasn't anything that God did on that seventh day except Shabbat -- rest. At the end of Friday night your Jewish friends would say "Shabbat shalom" -- peace for the sabbath day.

Perhaps a scientific observation, though I am not a scientist (I hope you understand that) but when it says that God rested from all the work which He had made and done, that means that He ceased from his work of creation. God is not now in the business of creating as He was in those first six days. Therefore, when we look at the scientific processes today, we make a mistake if we try to study creation in light of those particular processes. The fact that perhaps coal was already formed and light was here, etc., etc.

Now we come to a couple of verses that I'd like to translate just a little differently. Perhaps if you have a New King James Bible it may have already been done that way. Verse 5: And no shrub of the field was yet in the earth; and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for God had not caused it to rain upon the earth and there was not a man to till the ground." [These were some of the conditions in the days just before the creation of man.] But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

It's a little difficult to argue from silence but I think it's probably correct in this case that we have no indication there was any rain up to the time of the flood, and then there was plenty of it. Under the conditions where you have the canopy surrounding the earth, it seems that vegetation was watered by a mist, or we could call it dew, that sprang up. I've noticed that in recent mornings when I get up early enough, there is dew on the grass already, dew on the tomato plants, and so on. Apparently there was sufficient dew that it watered the vegetation in those particular days. Some have tried to translate that word "mist" by some other words, but it really is not correct, getting away from the seeming problem of mist being the watering force in the early days of the earth.

Then we come to a rehearsal of some of the things that took place in the first six days. What God did was record through Moses in chapter 1 the creation days one through six in an over-all view. Then when you come to chapter 2, He goes back and picks up just certain of those things and enlarges upon them. It is not a contradictory account; it's a comparable account where the details fit in.

That is also true of other places of Scripture. For example, Daniel dates many of the chapters of his book. But you'll find that some of the chapters dated later or written in the latter part of the book are dated earlier in the book. I think in the book of Revelation you'll find the same thing. John gives the scope of some things, then he stops, goes back and picks some other details up and brings them up to date. So here in chapter 2 of Genesis we have Moses going back and picking out certain things of the six creation days and speaking in more detail about them.